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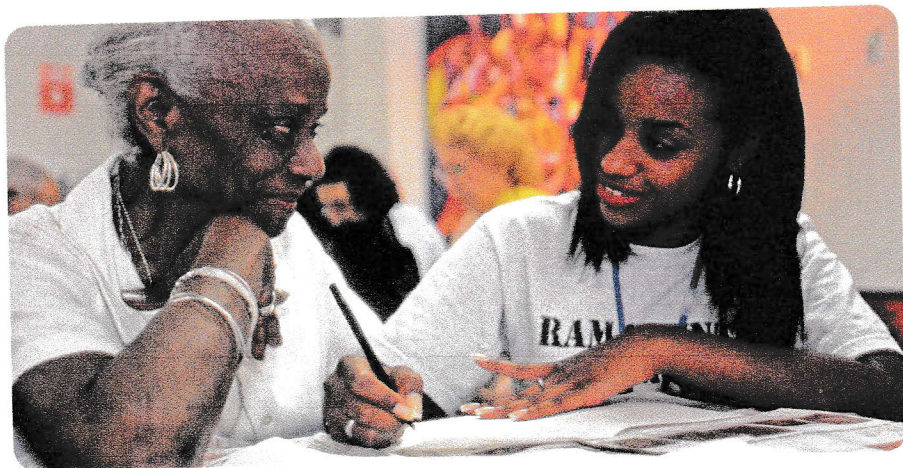
Power

Focus Question

- *Power—is it good or bad?*

In any group of people—whether it is your classroom, your sports team, or your circle of friends—some people have more **power** than others. One definition of power is the ability to achieve what you want. Within a group, power can be defined as the ability to get others to do what you want. There are many reasons why one person is more powerful than others. These include greater intelligence, persuasiveness, charisma, money, physical strength, attractiveness, and social status.

Power is a natural part of being human. We use it every day. We can use power to achieve personal and shared goals. We can also use power to deny certain people or groups equal opportunities to meet their needs and wants. This misuse of power can lead to **discrimination** and **inequalities**. Power can be very destructive in the wrong hands, but it can also be constructive if it is used to promote equality and improve lives.



▲ A student assists a senior at a local seniors' centre.

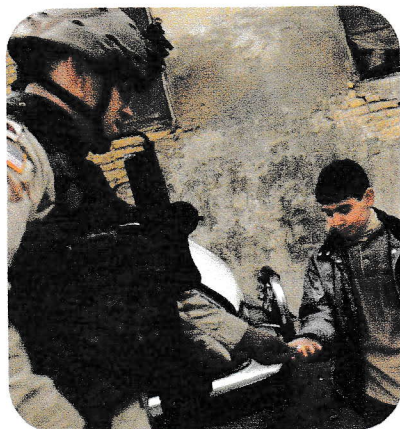
power: The ability of an individual or group to get what it wants.

discrimination: The unfavourable or prejudiced treatment of an individual or group based on race, sex, appearance, income, and so on.

inequalities: A term often used to refer to the differences in our society where some people have more money, education, and other resources than other people; these differences may be the result of discrimination.

Literacy Strategy

During reading, pause and think about what you're reading. Using what you already know about power, try to make connections between the text passage and the world you live in.



- ▲ A soldier hands out food to children. Is this an example of positive or negative power?

Literacy Strategy

After reading, think about what you've read. Use your notes containing your opinions and conclusions to answer the questions. Note how these scenarios make a connection between the content and the world around you.

Types of Power

There are many types of power that operate within our society and in the larger global community. Military power can be used for both good and evil ends. Political power and influence can be used positively or negatively. Corporate power can be used to benefit consumers and employees or to promote greed and overcharging. In a democracy, the voters and consumers ultimately judge how well elected leaders and large corporations use their power to satisfy the voter and the buyer.

Influence

People are constantly trying to influence politicians to do certain things. Interest groups will exert influence on decision makers—sometimes for the public interest, sometimes for private gain. If power is used responsibly, most people in a democratic society will benefit.

↔ Check Your Understanding

Consider the following scenarios. Write briefly how power is used in five of these scenarios. In which scenarios is power being used in a forceful way? In which scenarios is power being used in a persuasive way? In which scenarios is power based on rewards?

1. A mother insists that her children go to bed by 8:00 P.M. or they will lose their television privileges.
2. A student persuades the class to stop buying hamburgers at a certain restaurant because the extra packaging used by the restaurant is harming the environment.
3. You know that if you speak out against the government leader, you will "disappear."
4. You purchase a brand of running shoes that is endorsed by a major sports figure.
5. After watching pre-election TV ads for several weeks, you vote for a political party.
6. Your parents give you extra money for the "A's" on your report card.
7. After an earthquake, looters are imprisoned without trial.